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Lawmakers Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Protect Seniors' Access to Care by Strengthening Medicare

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Washington, D.C. – Today, Representatives Raul Ruiz (CA-25), Gus Bilirakis (FL-12), Jimmy Panetta (CA-19), and Ami Bera (CA-06) introduced bipartisan legislation, the Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, to protect seniors' access to care by ensuring Medicare keeps pace with rising health care costs. The bill helps prevent doctor shortages in Medicare by making sure payments better reflect the real cost of delivering care, especially in rural, underserved, and low-income communities.

Millions of seniors rely on Medicare to see their doctors, but year-to-year payment fluctuations have made it harder for physician practices to stay financially stable—forcing some to limit Medicare patients or close their doors entirely. By aligning Medicare payments more closely with inflation, this legislation aims to keep providers in the program so seniors can continue getting timely, high-quality care.

“Expanding access to health care by strengthening Medicare for Seniors is a priority of mine. It's becoming more difficult for Seniors to find physicians through Medicare,” **said Congressman Dr. Raul Ruiz (CA-25)**. “That's why I introduced the bipartisan Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act, which expands access to Medicare beneficiaries by helping ensure their doctors can keep their doors open. Everyone, including people in rural and underserved communities, deserve stable, reliable access to the care they depend on.”

For years, health experts and oversight bodies—including the Medicare Trustees and MedPAC—have warned that failing to update Medicare payments to reflect inflation could lead to reduced access to care for beneficiaries. Costs to run medical practices have risen nearly 50% over the past two decades, while Medicare payments have *fallen* when adjusted for inflation, putting pressure on physicians who continue to serve Medicare patients.

This legislation answers those warnings by stabilizing access for current and future Medicare beneficiaries.

“I'm deeply concerned that our outdated physician payment system is contributing to reduced access and delays for seniors seeking the care they deserve. This important legislation will help create greater stability for older Americans by strengthening access to services and supporting improved health outcomes. The need for this reform is especially acute in the rural communities I represent, where longstanding provider shortages make consistent, reliable Medicare payments all the more essential,” **said Congressman Bilirakis**.

“In California's 19th Congressional District, many constituents are finding that doctors' offices are overwhelmed, and many seniors are stuck waiting months to see a physician,” **said Rep. Panetta**. “By tying reimbursement rates to inflation, the *Strengthening Medicare for Patients and Providers Act* would help ensure that more doctors are available to treat patients and improve outcomes. Congress must be responsible to make Medicare work so patients can have affordable and accessible healthcare.”

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